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ABSTRACT

A study of differences in linguistic behavior between men and women in Amman, Jordan, used a random sample of 150 individuals as subjects. Distribution of lexical items was examined for variation correlating lexical choice with sex of the speaker, and phonological variable standardization and the manner in which choice of variant is conditioned by the speaker's sex were analyzed. Variables such as educational background, dialectal background, age, and membership in an urban or Bedouin group were also controlled. Three patterns of sex differentiation were found: (1) men use standard linguistic forms more often than women; (2) women produce urban linguistic variants more often than men; and (3) the tendency of some urban and Fellahiin men is to use the Bedouin variant in alternation with the standard and their local variants. The first of these patterns, which contradicts the pattern of Western women, is analyzed in terms of the role of women in the society and in the process of linguistic change and variation. (MSE)

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SEX DIFFERENTIATION AND LINGUISTIC VARIATIONS

A CASE STUDY: SPOKEN ARABIC IN AMMAN

Hassan Abdel-Jawad

A considerable number of sociolinguistic studies of Western speech communities have begun to present accurate, structured data illustrating the form that sex differentiation takes in the linguistic communities. The bulk of these studies have been interested in two major issues: Do women and men speak differently and what are the societal and cultural implications of these differences? These studies have revealed the general observation that sexual differentiation plays a major role in linguistic behavior (Fischer 1958; Labov 1966, 1972, 1979; Wolfram 1969; Fasold 1972; Trudgill 1975, to mention only these), and that, as Trudgill 1975 puts it:

> "..women, allowing for other variables, such as age, education and social class, consistently produce Linguistic forms which more closely approach those of the standard language or have higher prestige than those produced by men, or, alternatively, that they produce forms of this type more frequently than men." (p. 89)

Furthermore, Labov (1979) distinguished two distinctive patterns of this sexual differentiation when he stated that, "women are most often in the lead in changes in progress, but are more conservative for the stable sociolinguistic variables that may have acquired negative prestige." (p. 12)

In the first pattern, women are portrayed as leaders or initiators of linguistic changes. Gauchat and other French linguists discovered as early as the beginning of this century a number of sound changes in progress and found that women used more of the newer linguistic forms than men (Labov 1972:301-304). Recent studies seem to confirm this observation. (Labov 1966) found that women are almost a generation ahead of men in the raising of (eh) in New York City. This was also confirmed by Labov, Yaeger and Steiner 1972, and by studies of other cities such as Chicago and Detroit.

However, as Labov cautioned, "it would be a serious error to construct a general principle that women always lead...in linguistic change." (1972:303). Some cases can be cited where men lead in linguistic change or in the use of new vernacular forms in casual speech (Labov's Study of Martha's Vineyard Island).

The second and more relevant pattern to the present paper is the general finding that with respect to stable variables, women use fewer stigmatized forms and are more sensitive than men to the prestige pattern which very often corresponds to the standard forms. Women seem to be, contrary to the first pattern above, linguistically more conservative as they produce such prestigious standard forms more often than men. Labov 1972 and again 1979 stated that women use fewer stigmatized linguistic variants in careful speech, and are more sensitive than men to prestige patterns and to overt sociolinguistic values.

In an informative review of empirical studies Vaughn-Cooke (n.d) examined data on phonological and grammatical variables provided by a number of major empirical studies and found out that:

> "Analysis of 9 phonological features and 10 grammatical features have shown that women in 24 of 32 cases used the standard variant more often than men. For the other 8 cases, females used standard variants as often or nearly as often as males." (pp. 42-43).

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It is widely accepted that this normative behavior of women in Western communities is related to women's greater consciousness of social status and awareness of the prestige associated with certain forms of speech (Labov 1972; Romaine 1978; Trudgill 1975). Trudgill gave two possible reasons to explain this awareness: first, women feel that they are socially insecure and therefore they use language sometimes to secure and signal their social status, and secondly, men can be rated socially by what they do but women may be rated on how they appear (1975:91-92). Labov further argues "the sexual differentiation of speakers is therefore not a product of physical factors alone (i.e. vocal-cord difference)...but rather an expressive pasture which is socially more appropriate for one sex or the other." (1972:304).

In this paper I propose to examine present empirical data to: first, lend support to the claim that sex differentiation plays a major role in linguistic behavior, and, secondly, to show that the claim that females are generally more conservative with respect to the use of the standard forms holds true in the Western communities but not in the Arab (Middle Eastern) communities. In other words, women use the standard prestigious forms in both careful and casual styles less often than men. It is true, however, that women may lead in producing some local socially prestigious linguistic features.

The results cited in this paper are based on a sociolinguistic study of the city of Amman carried out in the winter of 1980 with a sufficiently large and heterogeneous random sample, 150 in number, of the population of the city, and reported in detail in Abdel-Jawad 1981. A systematic quantitative analysis of the data is the basis for the study of variation in which the main concern was to find the correlation between the linguistic variables and both the sociostylistic and linguistic constraints.

In Section 1 I shall examine the lexical variation demonstrating the correlation between lexical choice and the sex of

the speaker. Section 2 will examine the phonological variable (Q) standardization and how the choice of one variant rather than the other is conditioned also by the sex of the speaker. Section 3 will contain comments and conclusions.

I. Sex Differentiation and Lexical Choice

The lexicon in Arabic is the area with the greatest amount of variation and in which the departures from the plain colloquials are the most numerous (Blanc 1960). Acknowledging a number of persistent problems in dealing with lexical variation, I decided to classify the lexicon of spoken Arabic in Amman (henceforth SAA) into 4 categories, benefitting from Altoma (1969). The first two categories, I and II, (words which are pure or plain standard and words which are cognate and identical in phonemic shape with the standard items) are the closest to the standard variety, while categories III and IV (i.e. words which are cognate with the standard but not identical and pure colloquial words--non-cognate, non-identical) are removed from the standard (for more details see Abdel-Jawad 1981).

The results of my analysis indicate that women seem to use lexical items which belong to categories III and IV, the least standard, more often than men. On the other hand, men tend to use items from categories I and II, the most standard, more often than women do. In other words, men use the standard words more often than women. Tables 1 and 2 below show the distribution of the lexical items by sex and education respectively.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF THE LEXICAL ITEMS BY SEX

Sex	Standard I	Cognate Identical II	Cognate Non-iden. III	Colloquial (IV)	N
Female	6%	33%	42%	19%	3653
Male	14%	41%	34%	11%	8682

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF THE LEXICAL ITEMS BY SEX AND EDUCATION

Ed	Sex	Cat. I	Cat. II	Cat. III	Cat. IV	N
College	F	12%	38%	43%	8%	1429
	M	23%	44%	26%	7%	4015
H. School	F	4%	35%	44%	17%	975
	M	9%	41%	40%	10%	3323
Uned.	F	1%	25%	42%	33%	1248
	M	2%	31%	45%	22%	1344

It is clear from these two tables that men, in general, use standard items more often than women and that if other social factors such as education are considered, the same pattern of differentiation is repeated. Notice further that the differences in usage between males and females are much greater among the highly educated speakers than the less educated speakers.

2. Sex Differentiation and the Choice of (Q) Variants

The reflexes of the standard Arabic uvular voiceless /q/ show considerable variation in the colloquial varieties over time and space. The four major variants used in Jordan are (q-ʔ-g-k), so, for example, a word like galb "heart" can be heard as: (qalb ~ ʔalb ~ galb ~ kalb).

Because of the social and geographical importance of this variable as a carrier of local or regional loyalties, it has often been used by dialectologists as the main criterion for establishing the dialect boundaries or isoglosses in the Arabic dialects (i.e. G-dialects, k-dialects, and ʔ-dialects).

Today, in communities like Amman, many speakers use more than one of the variants of (Q). Each of these forms has a set of social values associated with it, and therefore the occurrence of any one form tells us something about the speaker and his background as well as the situation of the speech act. The shift

from one variant to the other can be described as patterned and functional rather than random.

The results of the VARBRUL analysis of (Q) standardization (i.e. the alteration between the local variants and the standard one), show very clearly the powerful effect of sex on the choice of one (Q) variant or another. In general, men are shown to favor the application of the (Q) standardization rule (i.e. changing the local variant into the standard one) with a probability of (.66) while women seem to disfavor the application of the rule with (.34) probability. This pattern again repeats itself at all levels of style, education, background and age. Tables 3 - 6 below demonstrate this pattern.

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) STANDARDIZATION BY SEX AND STYLE

	Style		
Sex	Formal	Informal	Casual
F	47%	30%	16%
M	74%	50%	27%

TABLE 4

PROBABILITY CONTRIBUTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF SEX FACTOR IN THE THREE DIALECTAL GROUPS

Sex	ʔ-dialect urban	G-dialect Bedouin	k-dialect fellaḥiin
F	.33	.46	.42
M	.67	.54	.58

TABLE 5

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) STANDARDIZATION BY SEX AND EDUCATION

Sex	College	H. School	Uned.
F	36%	28%	12%
M	71%	42%	18%

TABLE 6

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) STANDARDIZATION BY SEX AND AGE

Sex	Young 18-29	Middle 30-44	Old 45+
F	33%	31%	12%
M	43%	66%	43%

Generally speaking, these tables show that there is a significant difference in the usage of the standard variant (q) between men and women. Men seem to use the standard (q) more often than women. Similar results were also reported in Schmidt 1974 in his study of Cairene Arabic.

The distinction is an important one, yet it may be argued that "the observed covariation may be the result of a coincidental correlation of sex with another social division (e.g. education) which has stronger implications for speech than sex." (Smith 1979:115). Fortunately, the VARBRUL analysis is able to predict the independent weight of each internal and/or external factor (Cf. the results in Table 4 above). Furthermore, I investigated the distribution of (Q) standardization in terms of more than one factor. One way of doing this is to investigate the interrelationship among the different factors and to study their influence on the choice of the various variants. Table 7 below illustrates the contribution of sex, education and style to (Q) standardization.

TABLE 7

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) STANDARDIZATION BY SEX, EDUCATION AND STYLE

STYLE:	Formal		Informal		Casual	
Ed.	F	M	F	M	F	M
College	51%	84%	31%	60%	23%	39%
H. School	43%	60%	32%	40%	19%	26%
Uned.	20%	-	14%	20%	11%	17%

(- indicates an empty cell--no tokens)

This table demonstrates a regular and systematic pattern of sex differentiation. At every level, men are more users of the standard variant than women.

Another way of solving the problem of the incidental relation, overlapping, interaction or arbitrariness, is to control all the other social variables and try to keep them constant and comparable. To achieve this a balanced sample of 21 males and 21 females was chosen from our large sample. The speakers in this balanced sample are comparable in that there is a close match among them (e.g. a husband who is 68, college graduate, director of a government department, against his wife 52, college graduate, director of an orphanage).

The results of the analysis of this sample confirm our earlier findings: women are shown to disfavor the application of (Q) standardization (.39) while men are shown to favor the application of the same rule with a probability of (.61). The same pattern of sex differentiation is repeated at all levels of style (see Table 8), education (see Table 9), dialectal backgrouns (see Table 10), and age (see Table 11).

TABLE 8

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) STANDARDIZATION BY STYLE
FOR 21 MEN AND 21 WOMEN

Sex	Formal	Informal	Casual
F	41%	29%	18%
M	65%	50%	32%

TABLE 9

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) STANDARDIZATION BY EDUCATION
FOR 21 MEN AND 21 WOMEN

Sex	College	H. School	Uned.
F	36%	25%	19%
M	56%	48%	32%

TABLE 10

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) STANDARDIZATION BY SEX AND DIALECTAL BACKGROUND

Sex	Urban	Fellaḥiin	Bedouin
F	25%	33%	25%
M	45%	56%	44%

TABLE 11

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) STANDARDIZATION BY AGE FOR 21 MEN AND 21 WOMEN

Sex	Young 18-29	Middle 30-44	Old 45+
F	32%	35%	17%
M	48%	53%	45%

At this intersection three major questions must be raised: First, are these standard forms considered the most prestigious in the Arab speech communities? Secondly, are there any other prestigious forms of any source which may be used by women to symbolize an "overt" or "covert" prestige? Finally, as Smith (1979:113) puts it, are the speech variables seen as prestigious when used by one sex similarly valued by the other sex, and do women and men apply the same eveluative criteria in judging what is prestigious?

The first question can be answered positively. The standard variety in the Arab world is religiously motivated and it represents a national aspiration, a unifying drive, and a carrier of tradition, culture and history. Everywhere you go in the Arab world, standard Arabic is the official language as well as the language of instruction of the educational institutions. It is often considered the only right form and therefore it acts as a "corrective model" monitoring and directing the linguistic movement in the Arab world. In conclusion, the set of values attached to the standard variety makes it the most prestigious one.

To answer the second question empirically, I decided to examine the data to see if there were any other special forms preferred by women. The results of the analysis are demonstrated in Tables 12, 13 and 14.

TABLE 12

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) VARIANTS IN THE URBAN GROUP

	F	M
ɋ	23%	45%
ʔ	77%	46%
g	-	9%
N=	1595	2848

TABLE 13

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) VARIANTS FOR THE BEDOUIN GROUP

	F	M
q	24%	35%
ʔ	46%	4%
g	30%	61%
N=	672	1358

It is clear from these tables that the alternative variant used often by women is the urban variant (ʔ), (i.e. urbanization of speech). When some informants were asked to evaluate the (Q) variants, it was reported that the urban (ʔ) can be considered more feminine and more urban and modern. The Bedouin (g) was evaluated as more masculine, while the Fellaḥi (k) as most stigmatized as it is the topic of mockery, comment, and social awareness.

The process of urbanization in speech, i.e. the adoption of urban linguistic features, is observed mainly among educated women or women who participate in public life and whose social networks (L. Milroy 1980) are wider. Therefore, this (ʔ) is competing with the standard (q) among women.

As for the uneducated women, they seem to be more conservative linguistically. But this conservatism is different from that in Western communities. It is towards the vernacular forms but not towards the standard form, i.e. the retention of the vernacular forms (cf. Fellaḥi women and their retention of /k/). These women often have fewer contacts with the outside world and their social networks are limited to the neighborhood.

On the other hand, men appear to favor the adoption of the standard variant (g), i.e. standardization. The exchange of local variables is very limited and it can only be seen when some urban or Fellaḥi speakers use the Bedouin (g). It is interesting to notice that the urban variant (ʔ) is rarely used by men of the two other groups. The Fellaḥin variant (k) is never adopted by either the urban or the Bedouin speakers.

In relation to the third question raised above, it is often noted that speech can, by its real or imagined association with sex, acquire masculine or feminine connotations. Our analysis demonstrates that generally speaking, native speakers of both sexes associate the standard form (q) with formality, outside world and connections, and with men more than women. The urban (ʔ) is associated with urbanization, modernization and it is, therefore, the preferred feature for women of nonurban groups.

In an informal and random sample, 40 educated (college students) speakers of both sexes representing all dialectal groups were asked this question: How would you rate the 4 variants (i.e. q, ʔ, g, k) in terms of prestige, sex, formality and personal preference? The answers were of great interest. More than 80% of them reported that they prefer to use their own local variant as they are used to it and they can be better understood in their communities if they use it. However, these informants did not rate their local variant as the best, most prestigious and the one they wish to use. More than 60% of them expressed a wish to use (q) all the time, especially men. More than 50% of these speakers believe that the urban variant (ʔ) is a feminine feature. Non-urban men said that they would never use this variant and that if they used it, they would be made fun of by their families and friends. Non-urban women, on the other hand, siad that they like to use (ʔ) and that they don't care

if their sisters or daughters use it, but they would punish their brothers and/or sons if they use it. The majority of the speakers feel that (ʔ) is soft, gentle, therefore feminine.

3. Comments and Conclusions

Throughout the previous analysis, the following patterns of sex differentiation in spoken Arabic in Amman have been established:

a) Men use the standard linguistic forms more often than women.

b) Women, on the other hand, produce the urban linguistic variants more often than men.

c) The tendency of some urban and Fellaḥiin men is to use the Bedouin variant (g) in alternation with the standard (q) and their local variants.

Pattern (a) above seems to contradict the patterns reported in Western communities. Why do women in Amman in particular and in the Eastern communities in general (cf. Schmidt 1974, Salam 1980 for similar results) do this?

The linguistic behavior is very often the reflection of the social and cultural structures of the speech community or the social network of the speaker. The social and cultural expectations in the Arab communities require women in general not to take an active role in communicating with the outside world. They are not expected to talk, argue, or discuss things with men, especially strangers. Men usually handle all these public situations. Practically, men are the representatives and spokesmen of the house as well as the breadwinners. Women are expected to keep their voices down in the presence of men and not to interrupt men while talking, even in family gatherings. I have here to stress that these are empirical findings rather than personal judgements. The dominant rule, though changing slowly, is that women do not attend men's gatherings. If male guests come to visit, the man of the house receives, entertains and welcomes them. In sum, there are two distinctive sub-domains in Eastern communities:

a) the domain of women characterized often by informality, and

b) the domain of men where formality could prevail in certain situations.

The two worlds are kept distinct with limited contacts between them.

In comparison, women in Western communities take a more active role in the outside world and in communication with the outside world and have more social mobility. While men's jobs and income define the social level or status of the house, women express this social status symbolically, i.e. by decorating the house, dressing and speaking carefully. This, of course, requires the adoption of the more prestigious standard forms of speech and the latest fashions.

Gillian Sankoff (personal communication) told me that in some Western communities such as the British rural communities, while men keep busy on the farm, women take utmost care in decorating their houses in such a way as to make them look like middle class houses. Those women reflect the social refined image of the household.

One interpretation of this behavior is that women in Western communities "specialize" in the expressive domain, while remaining largely out of competition with men in the instrumental domain. Achievement in mastering prestigious cultural norms is not a threat to men in that it is defined as women's proper domain. Practically speaking, women are the spokesmen and social representatives of the house.

This leads us to the concept of sex and the division of labor and how it plays its role in sexual differentiation in speech. In Western communities, women's jobs are mainly in the line of public services, i.e. jobs like receptionists, secretaries, public relations officers or representatives, saleswomen, and so on. Such jobs require being articulate and careful in speech and refining one's language by using the standard prestigious forms. This relationship between occupation and the usage of the standard forms has been

referred to by D. Sankoff and S. Laberge (1978) in talking about the 'Linguistic Market': "Teachers, actors, and receptionists tend to speak a more standard variety than other people of similar social or economic position (1978:239).

On the other hand, men take a more active role in the line of manual jobs or 'blue-collar' jobs which require physical effort rather than being careful in speech or dress. Women in their lines of work tend to refine their language while men feel that such a refinement is counter to their masculinity and manhood. This phenomenon is evident in the Black American communities whose women are mainly involved in secretarial service kinds of jobs, while men are more in manual jobs. Black women, therefore, have more upward social mobility and more access to the standard language which explains, at least in part, why they are always in the lead in using the standard forms (cf. Vaughn-Cooke, nd.). This social mobility which brings women to a more direct contact with the standard prestigious forms and requires improvement in one's language, dress and manners is characteristic of women in Western communities.

Many writers (e.g. Thorne and Henley 1975:17-18, citing numerous other sources) agree that, especially on the lexical level, talking 'badly', i.e. using coarse, bad, dirty words is acceptable for men but not for women. Men are in direct contact with the actual material things, and they are expected to develop special language norms (jargons) which are always removed from the standard. On the other hand, women are in direct contact with the social and 'gentle' aspects of life where they are expected to symbolize the social status of their husbands.

In light of all these different cultural and social norms, one can understand why women in the Middle-Eastern communities in general, do not lead in linguistic changes, especially those towards the standard forms. A standard form is associated with formality, public life and the outside world, which are not the domains of women. Instead, women look for local social prestige

which can be attained by using the urban variants. These are associated with modernization and progress, a dominant local belief, and are socially evaluated as soft, gentle, light, and feminine.

Speaker 53, female, college graduate, as well as many other speakers, told me that she and her sisters use (ʔ) because it is more suitable for women, and she added that this (ʔ) is not good for men, and therefore her father and brothers use (g) instead. This phenomenon is very common in this community. This explains why non-urban women tend to use the urban variants and that the urban women retain their local variants. This gives us half the answer.

The second half has to deal with the fact that women are conservative in Eastern communities, i.e. they retain their local vernacular linguistic features which are in some cases stigmatized. Non-urban uneducated women seem to retain their local variants such as (k) and (g) for (Q) and /c / for (K), at all stylistic levels. Those uneducated women are often confined to their local communities or neighborhoods in which the vernacular is often not stigmatized. These women do not participate in public life and so they do not need to modify their speech in any direction. In fact, they often exhibit less variation than other liberal, educated women. However, if these uneducated women have active roles in society, i.e. have more complicated social networks, they will often adopt the urban variants. By way of illustration, see Table 15, below, which shows the distribution of (Q) variants among the Fellahi women by education which contributes to the degree of openess or closeness of their social networks.

TABLE 15

DISTRIBUTION OF (Q) VARIANTS AMONG FELLAHI WOMEN BY EDUCATION

Ed.	q%	K%	?%	g%	N
College	41%	1%	58%	-	359
H. School	43%	24%	33%	-	297
Uned.	16%	74%	9%	-	801

To sum up, in Amman:

a) the standard linguistic forms can be marked as:

[+ formal
+ national prestige
+ masculine]

b) the urban variants can be characterized as:

[- formal
+ local prestige
+ feminine]

It is clear then that sexual differentiation in speech often plays an important role in the mechnaism of linguistic change and variation, though the patterns of differentiation differ from community to community. One can predict, based on this sex differentiation that in the future, and as a result of the spread of education and employment among women of all origins in Amman and in the Middle East in general, the urban linguistic variants such as (?) will replace the other vernacular forms among women. This (?) will be used variably with (q). As expected, this process of urbanization may be interrupted by the constant contact with the roots in the village, camp, or tribe where the local variants are stronger.

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